

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Williston (068-0065)

other names/site number Hidden Place

## 2. Location

street & number 13430 Constitution Highway not for publication

N/A

city or town Orange vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Orange code 137 Zip 22960

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this   X   nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property   X   meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally        statewide   X   locally. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Signature of certifying official | Date |
|----------------------------------|------|

**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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|   |      |
|---|------|
| Signature of commenting or other official | Date |
|---|------|

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: \_\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**Williston**  
**Orange County, Virginia**

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

  X   building(s)  
     district  
     site  
     structure  
     object

### Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>6</u>     | <u>0</u>        | buildings  |
| <u>1</u>     | <u>0</u>        | sites      |
| <u>0</u>     | <u>0</u>        | structures |
| <u>0</u>     | <u>0</u>        | objects    |
| <u>7</u>     | <u>0</u>        | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)[illegible]

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

[illegible]

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)Late Victorian, Italianate**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)foundation Brickroof Tinwalls Brick

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

## Architecture

### Period of Significance

1867 - 1924

## Significant Dates

1867

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

## Cultural Affiliation

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

\_\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary Location of Additional Data

X State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

— Federal agency

Local government

University

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Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 28.908 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

|      |           |                |      |           |                |
|------|-----------|----------------|------|-----------|----------------|
| Zone | Easting   | Northing       | Zone | Easting   | Northing       |
| A    | <u>17</u> | <u>750475</u>  | B    | <u>17</u> | <u>750980</u>  |
|      |           | <u>4236190</u> |      |           | <u>4236300</u> |
| C    | <u>17</u> | <u>751020</u>  | D    | <u>17</u> | <u>750520</u>  |
|      |           | <u>4236140</u> |      |           | <u>4235840</u> |

See continuation sheet.

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Orange County, Virginia

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Calder Loth

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date August 2005

street & number: 2801 Kensington Avenue telephone 804-367-2323

city or town Richmond state Virginia zip code 23221

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Col. and Mrs. Jospeh F. Vilga

street & number 13430 Constitution Highway telephone 540-672-5383

city or town Orange state Virginia zip code 22960

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Williston  
Orange County, Virginia

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**7. Summary Description:**

Summary Description

Located just east of the town of Orange on State Route 20, a Virginia Scenic Byway, Williston is a compact farm complex dating from just after the Civil War. The focal point of the property is an Italianate dwelling house given a stately character by its two-story portico. The house is situated at the base of a broad, tree-dotted park extending to the highway. Behind the house is a street of domestic outbuildings including a smokehouse, henhouse, servant's house, and carriage house. Also on the property are a granary and the foundation and lean-to of what was formerly a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn. A broad pasture extends to east of the house. The house itself is a two-story, double-pile brick dwelling employing five-course American bond with Flemish variant on its principal elevations. Remarkable stenciled and painted murals on the dining room walls distinguish the interior. Except for a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century lengthening of the stair hall, the interior survives with few alterations and preserves nearly all of its original trim.

Detailed Description

Originally part of a much larger landholding, Williston today is a small estate consisting of twenty-nine acres stretched along State Route 20 at the western edge of the town of Orange. The property serves to maintain the rural character of the highway connecting Orange with James Madison's Montpelier, located about two miles west of Williston. The house, outbuildings, and landscaped grounds are at the western end of the property. The rest of Williston consists mainly of a large pasture to the east of the house. The Norfolk-Southern Railway line defines the southern edge.

Williston's stately though compact dwelling house is set back some 100 yards from the highway in a grassy park dotted with an impressive collection of large trees of different varieties. Defining the east side of the park are long rows of boxwood, formerly part of a boxwood nursery. Traversing the northern part of the park is the earthen trace of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century railroad right-of-way, which was abandoned by the Southern Railway Company in 1914 for its present line south of the property.

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**Williston  
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The dwelling house is a two-story Italianate-style structure on a high basement. A tall portico with paired fluted polygonal columns set on pedestals dominates the facade. The pedestals may be a later alteration. The portico pediment has an open tympanum and a deep bracketed cornice. The cornice extends around the eaves of the side elevations. Above the cornice is a shallow hipped roof covered in standing-seam sheet metal. The portico shelters the main entrance, which has double doors framed by sidelights and a rectilinear transom. Long brackets support a balcony placed immediately above the front entrance. An interesting detail is the balcony's lyre-shaped sawn balusters in the rail. Taller but similar balusters are on the sides of the lower level.

Flanking the portico are paired windows on both floors. The façade and side walls are laid in five-course American bond with Flemish variant. Traces of penciling remain on the mortar joints. The walls on the rear are in regular five-course American bond. The rear deck and its Chinese lattice railings were added by the present owners after 1992, replacing a crude set of wooden steps.

As originally built, the house had an irregular, U-shaped plan defined by two rear ells. The first floor of the rear ell on the east side contains the current kitchen. The rear ell on the west side was shallower, containing a small library behind the parlor. The resulting space between the two ells was roofed over the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a consequence of which was the lengthening of the stair hall on both the first and second floors. This alteration may have been generated by the desire to allow more floor space between the front door and the bottom of the stair. In the original plan, the stair began very close to the front door. The whole stair structure was moved back about ten feet when the hall was lengthened. This permitted access to the parlor through a new door in front of the stair rather than behind it. The original depth of the stair hall is evident in the break in the floorboards. The stair itself is a conventional Italianate-style stair with heavy turned newel, turned balusters, and scrolled brackets. The oval handrail winds at the landing.

The dining room occupies the northeast corner of the first floor. The current owner has been carefully peeling away the wallpaper to reveal remarkable stenciled decorations consisting of floral motifs in colors of dark green, pale red, and yellow against a pale blue-green background. The stenciling is applied in both the upper and lower sections of the wall, which are separated by a stenciled chair rail.

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Sometime after the initial stenciling was applied, the scheme was enriched by the painting of folk-style decorations consisting of abstracted hills and trees above both the chair rail and the mantel. Further embellishments included large leafy sprigs with white flowers. Thus far, only the west wall and chimney wall decorations have been exposed. A small section of wallpaper has been removed from the ceiling showing a more complex decorative treatment. The fancy treatment of the walls is offset by the more conventional woodwork, which includes door frames of symmetrical architrave trim with paterae corner blocks and a simple baseboard. The crown molding is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century addition. Lending status to the room is a white marble mantel without carving.

Similar woodwork is used in the hall and in the parlor. The parlor mantel is a late Federal mantel with paired colonnettes and is not original to the house. The parlor also has an added crown molding. Small traces of wallpaper have been removed to reveal that the parlor walls were also decorated with stenciling but in simpler patterns of geometric bands without floral motifs.

Behind the dining room is a service pantry, which originally held a secondary stair that has since been removed. Because the original kitchen was in the basement, the space used for the current kitchen probably was originally used as a bedroom.

The three second-floor bedrooms are treated relatively plainly. Each has its original wooden mantel consisting of plain Doric pilasters supporting a wide plain frieze and narrow cornice. The door frames have symmetrical architraves with paterae corner blocks, but these are simpler than those on the first floor. These rooms also have added crown moldings.

In the basement, evidence of the original stair location can be seen on the west wall of the center passage. The northeast basement room may have once served as a summer dining room. The room below the current kitchen likely served as the original kitchen.

Located immediately to the southwest of the house is a "street" of outbuildings. These buildings appear to be contemporary with the main house and not survivors from an earlier dwelling. The northernmost building is a brick smokehouse with a gable roof covered with standing-seam sheet metal. The building next in line to the south is a board-and-batten henhouse. It also has a gable roof covered with standing-seam sheet metal. Two doors on the front provide access to the



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interior. On the building's rear wall are two tiny windows, one preserving an ornamental wooden grill.

South of the henhouse is a weatherboarded frame structure that has variously been identified as a servant's quarters, a cookhouse, and a slave quarter. It most likely was originally used for servant's quarters, slavery having been abolished by the time the Williston's dwelling house was built.

Continuing the line to the south is a former carriage house. This also is a weatherboarded building with a sheet-metal clad gable roof. It has been converted to an office by the current owners.

To the southwest of the outbuilding street is a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century double-pen frame granary. The granary formerly had shed additions but these have been removed. To the west of the granary is the brick foundation of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn with its surviving lean-to shed. All of the buildings, including the barn foundations are considered contributing.

The remaining portion of Williston, stretching to the east of the curtilage, consists of a large open pasture bordered on the east by woodlands separating the property from the Norfolk-Southern Railway line.

Inventory (all resources are contributing):

1. Main House
2. Smokehouse
3. Henhouse
4. Servant's House
5. Carriage House
6. Granary
7. Site: foundation and lean-to of late 19<sup>th</sup> century barn

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Williston  
Orange County, Virginia**

Summary Statement of Significance

Williston represents the persistence of traditional plantation architecture and layout that lingered in rural areas of Virginia following the Civil War and is, therefore, eligible under National Register Criterion C. The house and its ancillary structures were erected around 1867 by Joseph Hiden, an Orange County businessman and public official. The stateliness of the Southern antebellum idiom was maintained here in the structure's tall proportions and portico. The design reflects the influence of contemporary fashion with its use of an Italianate bracketed cornice, sawn-work railings, and vaguely Gothic columns. A unique feature of Williston is the remarkable dining room wall murals recently revealed under layers of wallpaper. The murals consist of rich stenciled decoration to which freehand folk-like floral and scenic decorations were later applied. Around the mantel is a naturalistic scene reminiscent of French scenic wallpaper. Nothing comparable to these murals has been recorded in Virginia. Subordinate to the house is the well-preserved "street" of outbuildings, a complex little different from those built in the region decades earlier.

Background Information

Present-day Williston was originally part of a 6500-acre tract granted to John Baylor in 1726. In 1808, the Baylor grant was subdivided and sold to various owners, including Paul Verdier and Thomas Macon, brother-in-law to President James Madison. In 1833, Joseph Hiden purchased from Verdier a 100-acre tract southwest of the town of Orange. This tract, on which Williston was to be established, was known then as Baylor's Mountain or the Mountain tract. Among the other properties Hiden purchased from Verdier were Bells' Tavern in Orange (now the site of the Orange County Courthouse) and Montpeliso, a large dwelling erected in 1819 on a hill above the town. Hiden lived with his family at Montpeliso (1) and operated a boys' school there in the 1850s, around which time he added wings to accommodate the students. Confederate officers were billeted at Montpeliso during the Civil War and Confederate wounded were later sheltered there.

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Hidden sold Montpeliso in 1868 and moved to Williston, then called Hidden Place, presumably

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<sup>1</sup> Montpeliso is still standing and is currently divided into apartments. Following its sale in 1868 to Mary B. Stanard, its name was shortened to Peliso.

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having erected the house just prior to moving. (2) The house Hiden built was little different in layout and general character from the plantation dwellings built prior to the Civil War, thus reflecting the persistence of traditional forms in the area. The portico with its paired columns was a characteristic feature of high-style plantation houses of the antebellum period. The Italianate detailing, on the other hand, particularly the bracketed cornice, was typical of mid-19<sup>th</sup>—century architecture throughout the country, having been popularized by pattern books such as Samuel Sloan's The Model Architect, of 1852. The "street" of vernacular outbuildings behind the house, which includes a smokehouse, henhouse, servant's house, and carriage house, differs little from similar complexes of earlier decades. Although slaves never tended this complex, Hiden's servants may well have been former slaves.

Hiden did not long enjoy his new house, having died in 1869. His heirs (sons and daughters, and their spouses) (3) deeded the 100-acre property with its house and outbuildings to Hiden's widow, Cordelia U.T. Hiden—his second wife—as her "dower land" for the rest of her natural life. (4)

It is not known when the dining room murals and other decorations were applied on the interior but stylistically they are mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in character and were likely executed soon after the house was built. The stenciling was augmented, probably within a few years or less, with major elements of freehand detailing, including floral sprigs, and folk-like scenes of hilly trees. These latter elements are reminiscent of scenes in French scenic wallpapers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Surviving stenciled interior decorations are extremely rare in Virginia. The Williston work does not match any other known stenciling in the state, and the later freehand applications make the whole work a unique example of area folk art. (5)

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Following Cordelia Hiden's death, the property passed through a series of owners until purchased

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2 The present house does not show in the 1864 Confederate map of Orange County.

3 One of Joseph Hiden's daughters, Lucy Maria, was married to James A. Madison, great-nephew and namesake of President Madison.

4 1869 Deed book, Orange County Circuit Court

5 See comments on the Williston decorations in an email letter from Barbara Luck, Curator, Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, dated July 21 2004 and filed in the Williston archive file (68-65), Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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in 1910 by William B. Willis and his wife Nelly. It was during their ownership that the property came to be known as Williston. In 1914, the Willis's sold an 8.73 strip across the rear of the property to the Southern Railway Company in order to relocate the railroad track that originally ran across the front of the property, between the house and the current State Route 20. The railroad right-of-way trace is still visible in the front yard.

The property passed to William and Nelly Willis's son, Lewis Byrd Willis, and his wife Lucy Lee Willis in 1924. In 1962, Margaret Lee Mulick, Lewis Willis's niece, inherited Williston. Mrs. Mulick soon subdivided the property, but retained twenty-nine acres with the house. In 1972 she sold the twenty-nine acres to Southern Seminary, a woman's junior college headquartered in Buena Vista, Virginia. The current owners, Lt. Colonel and Mrs. Joseph Vilga, purchased Williston from Southern Seminary in 1994 and undertook a long-term rehabilitation of the house and outbuildings.

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Grymes Memorial School, Inc., Historic Orange County Virginia: Map and Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition,  
(Orange, Virginia, 1996)

Ann L. Miller: Antebellum Orange (Orange County Historical Society, 1988)

Orange County Deed Books, 1867-1994

## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded on the north by State Route 20, on the south by the Norfolk-Southern Railway lines, and on the east and west by adjacent owner property lines. The 28.908-acre tract is known as tax parcel 43-76 in the Spotswood District of Orange County (map included).

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated property conform to the property lines of what currently comprises the Williston estate. The twenty-nine acre tract is what remains of what was originally a much larger holding. Despite its relatively small size, the current tract preserves a rural setting for this historically agrarian property. State Route 20 and the Norfolk-Southern Railway line provide well defined northern and southern boundaries for the property.

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All photographs are of:  
Williston, Orange County, Virginia  
DHR File #068-0065

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**Williston  
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**Taken by Calder Loth on February 18, 2005  
Negatives are stored at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

Photo 1 of 4: View of Main House from North  
Negative #21870, frame #16

Photo 2 of 4: View of Street of Outbuildings from South  
Negative # 21871, frame #27

Photo 3 of 4: View of Dining Room Murals along West Wall  
Negative #21871, frame #3

Photo 4 of 4: View of Dining Room Murals along South Wall  
Negative #21871, frame #4